

Hymnals and Hymnody in Late Qing and Early Republican China

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> *I can conceive no higher ideal than to seek to lead the Chinese church to inherit the wealth of hymns, psalms, and chants which already exist with all the treasures of music which the West possesses.* (Bonsey, 1909: 283)

On September 27, 1807, twenty-one days after his arrival in Canton, Robert Morrison 馬禮遜 (1782-1834), an Anglo-Scottish evangelist and the first Protestant missionary in China, wrote in a letter to his brother:

> Solitary is my situation. There may be one, but I know not of him who loves the Lord. Today, I confine myself entirely to my room. In the forenoon and also in the afternoon, I sing a hymn, read a psalm, as in public worship, and sing again (Morrison, 1839: 175).

Because of the official ban on Christianity issued by the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor in 1724, Morrison's initial missionary efforts were confined to a small circle of "his own household, consisting of a servant or two and two teachers" (Chalmers, 1876: 174). But Morrison made best of the situation by persuading his Chinese associates to join him in prayer and Bible study and "sing hymns with him" (Cited in Rubinstein, 1996: 82).

Almost a hundred years later, on March 23, 1901, a group of foreign missionaries, accompanied by German and French military officers, conducted in Baoding 保定, Zhili 直隶

province, formal burial services for the missionaries and Chinese converts massacred during the Boxer Rebellion. The Rev. J. W. Lowrie describes the scene thus:

> The service opened with some rich and plaintive strains from the band which were followed by a reading of Scripture by Rev. C. A. Killie, a singing in English of the beautiful hymn, "Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep," which, especially the last verse, ever seemed more appropriate, a memorial address by Rev. John Werry, D. D., who spoke of each individual whose death we had gathered to commemorate. The German musicians followed with two stanzas [of] "Ein fest Burg ist unser Gott" [A Mighty Fortress Is Our God]. Rev. Dr. Sheffield of the American Board led in prayer, Mr. Lowrie followed in some remarks to the Chinese gathered there. The Chinese sang the native rendering of the hymn, "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home." Rev. Dr. Arthur Smith of the American Board pronounced the benediction. The band followed with a soft and gentle air and the service ended (Ketler, 1902: 394-395).

That Christian hymn-singing played an important role in the daily life of many China missionaries and therefore was instrumental in the transmission of Western music in China is here plain to see.

Speaking of "all the influences which have been brought to bear upon indigenous music styles in Oceania," Mervyn McLean, an ethnomusicologist specialised in Māori and Pacific Music, states, "hymn-singing is arguably the most important" (1986: 34). This statement is just as true of the situation in China. One of the important factors accounting for the primacy of hymn-singing influence, as Edwin Burrows has argued in his study of the Tuamotus, was "because it was introduced not by chance but by deliberate teaching, with the emotional power of religion behind it" (Burrows, 1933: 97-98). Yet both the processes of hymn book compiling and actual teaching of hymn-singing remain little-documented in Chinas. In this article I shall first outline the process of hymn book compiling by tracing the origins and evolution of Protestant hymns in China from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. This is followed by a detailed analysis of missionary discussions of problems, especially those of a musical nature, associated with the introduction of Christian hymns to Chinese Christians. And in the final part I shall discuss the ways in which Chinese Christians responded to the types of hymn music they were introduced to and how their response led to an emergence of Chinese indigenous hymns.

1. Translations of Hymn Books and Hymnology

One of the channels through which the missionaries facilitated the spread of Western music in China was the singing of hymns. Besides spreading the gospel by lyrics, hymns are particularly effective in creating atmosphere conducive to Christian worships. The atmosphere is "created through the singing of hymns as well as through the recitation of short prayers" (Rubinstein, 1996: 361). It was no coincidence that "in China, missionaries regarded hymns as a priority and as powerful means by which to proselytise" (Charter & DeBernardi, 1998: 84).

Among Protestant China missionaries, William E. Soothill 蘇慧廉 (1861-1935), a Methodist missionary who arrived in Wenzhou 温州 in 1882, stood out as the most unequivocal in his belief in the efficacy of music in Christian evangelization of China. "An impulse to better and holier life can come just as easily through good music as through a sermon," he declared in 1890. But "good music takes the shortest cut to the heart, it goes straight there;

[whereas] a sermon has to take a by-way through the mind first" (Soothill, 1890: 227). The Rev. Chauncey Goodrich 富善 (1836-1925) of the North China Mission certainly regarded hymns as an important priority in missionary work. So much so that in a speech delivered at the General Conference of Protestant Missionaries of China in Shanghai, May 1877, he went so far as to declare that the Hymn Book was as important as the Bible (Goodrich, 1877: 215).

Indeed, convinced of the efficacy of hymns as an indispensable tool to convert the heathen Chinese, most of the missionaries took an active part in the production of hymnbooks. This is evidenced not only by the large quantity of hymnbooks produced but also by the large number of "editorials, articles, and letters debating the issues that surrounded the production of hymns in Chinese" that featured regularly in the missionary journal The Chinese Recorder from the 1870s onward (Charter & DeBernardi, 1998: 83).

Scholars of Sino-Western cultural exchange have given vastly different figures regarding the number of hymnbooks produced by Protestant missionaries in China. According to the ethnomusicologist and music historian, Han Kuo-huang 韓國鐄, at least 34 hymnals were printed in China between 1838 and 1922 (Han, 2001: 231). Based on information gleaned from Alexander Wylie's 偉烈亞力 (1815-1887) 1867 book Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese, Tseun-hsuin Tsien 錢存訓, arguably the most influential Chinese librarian in America, cites 18 hymnbooks in "literary style" and 21 in "various dialects" from 1810 to 1867 (Tsien, 1954: 311). In his PhD thesis, the most thorough study of Christian hymns in China to date, David Sheng 盛宣恩 lists 208 hymnbooks published in Chinese from the year 1818 to the publication of the union hymnal, *Hymns of Universal Praise* (*Putian Songzan* 普天頌贊), in 1936 (Sheng, 1964: 487-519).

When the Protestant missionaries first arrived in China they tended to translate the Christian hymns into the language of the literati, the *wenli* 文理 style (Sheng, 1964: 78-79). Although they were aware that only a small percentage of the Chinese populace could understand their messages conveyed in this style, many of the early translators deemed literary Chinese to be the only style "worthy to enshrine rich gems of religious inspiration" (Munn, 1911: 708). In other words, by adopting the *wenli* style instead of the more accessible vernacular, *baihua* 白話 style, these Protestant missionaries took the calculated risk of alienating their social base, the dirt poor and the dispossessed. Predictably, the missionary's effort to couch Christian messages with beautiful wrapping in order to earn the respect of China's cultural elite was utterly unfruitful. Given that "the vast majority of the educated classes either passively or actively rejected Christianity" (Cohen, 1961: 169), their labour caused nothing but antagonism. Besides, the missionary's effort in translating hymns into elegant *wenli* style often produced dismal results, owing to vast differences in the two linguistic and poetic traditions. Furthermore, educated Chinese, if they ever bothered to look at the hymns produced by the missionaries, often went beyond just taking a dim view of their hymn lyrics (Fitch, 1895: 467). So it is not surprising that dissenting voices over the use of *wenli* began to be heard from very early on.

The Scottish evangelist, William C. Burns 賓惠廉 (1815-1868), was one of the first missionaries to address the issue by translating and writing original "hymns in Chinese for the special purpose of teaching Christian doctrine in a form which could easily be retained in the mind of the people" (Champness, 1906: 674). Burns was initially opposed to writing hymns in colloquial Chinese. After being sent to China by the Presbyterian Church of England in 1847, he wrote some well-known hymns in the wenli style and issued in Xiamen 廈門 (1851)

a hymnal of 68 hymns (MacGillivray, 1912: 254). The fact that Burns eventually returned to write wenli style hymns after he successfully produced several dialect hymnals says much about the complicated nature of the issue (Sheng, 1964: 86).

Burns was by no means the only early Protestant missionary to toil with idea of indigenisation of Christian hymns. Nor was he the only one to make use of local dialects. In 1852, William Young 葉韙良, a missionary of the London Missionary Society, compiled a hymnbook of 13 hymns in the Amoy dialect (MacGillivray, 1912: 254). In 1859, the American Baptist missionary A. B. Cabaniss 郟愛比 printed a 21-hymn book in Shanghai in the Wu 吴 dialect phonetics (Chen, 2003: 40). Divie B. McCartee 麥嘉締 of the American Presbyterian Mission Board issued Tsán meì she(Hymns of Praise) in 1860 in the dialect phonetics of Ningpo 寧波 (Sun & Wong , 2001: 57). John L. Nevius 倪維思 of the American Presbyterian Mission (North) published the earliest Mandarin (*guanhua* 官話) hymnal *Songyang zhenshen ge* 頌揚真神歌 (Songs in Praise of the True God) in 1864. But this already sizable book (100 hymns) was soon to be superseded by a revised and enlarged edition (221 hymns besides doxologies and chants) jointly produced by Calvin Mateer 狄考文 and Nevius 倪維思 entitled *Songshen shengshi* 頌神聖詩 (Sacred Songs in Praise of the God) (Candlin, 1893: 168; MacGillivray, 1912: 255). The above-mentioned Chauncey Goodrich 富善, a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions who held that the ideal hymns should be "written in a style low enough to be readily and generally understood, and high enough to command respect among men of culture," (Goodrich, 1877: 224) collaborated with Henry Blodget 白漢理 in issuing a Mandarin hymnbook of 315 hymns (*Songzhu shige* 頌主詩歌), nineteen doxologies and twelve chants in 1877.

The last mentioned hymnal, more widely known as the Blodget and Goodrich Hymnal or the Chinese Hymnal, was so highly regarded that one anonymous reviewer regarded it as the only "one you can leave lying about in the chapel without shivering every time a literary-looking stranger comes in and picks one up" (Anon, 1887: 362). In fact, so many missionaries supported the use of spoken regional dialects for hymn translation or composition that by the mid-1870s the practice had been accepted as a matter of fact. By the early 1910s, the Rev. Donald MacGillivray 季理斐 (1862-1931), one of the best known Canadian Presbyterian missionaries in China, had found evidence of forty-three different hymn books in the various dialects of China (Munn, 1911: 708). Even in the far-flung Yunnan 雲南 hymnbooks printed in the Miao phonetic symbols were widely circulated among the Miao 苗 and Lisu 傈僳 tribes (Yang, 1990: 82-88).

2. Protestant Hymnody - Coexistence and Absorption

The choice between the wenli and a local dialect in hymn translation was not the only problem that early Protestant China missionaries had encountered in their efforts to indigenise Christian hymns. Problems of a linguistic nature, such as metre, rhythm, tone, rhyme and so on also drove missionaries to despair. Speaking of his own experience but in an account no doubt just as true of other missionaries, George T. Candlin 甘霖 (1853-1924), a British missionary in China, wrote in 1893:

> Every line is a difficulty, every rhyme an embarrassing perplexity, every word a point for the selection of twenty alternatives of varying strength, shade, fitness, &c. We have puzzled, tortured, twisted it about, inverted the order of the sentiments, transposed the words, fretted and vexed

> ourselves and disturbed our sleep for a week over it, and at the end produced something which seeming sunlight-clear to our own mind gave us an intense throb of satisfaction, until submitting it to an intelligent Chinese teacher, and modestly concealing from him the fact that it was our own production, he has read it through several times and then with an exasperating innocence of perplexity, has asked, "Will the 牧師 kindly explain to him what it means?" (Candlin, 1893: 172).

George F. Fitch 費啟鴻 (1845-1923) of the American Presbyterian Mission, Shanghai, explained the obstacles facing missionaries "to produce Christian lyrics in Chinese" in these terms:

> Hymnology among the Chinese is beset with several difficulties, prominent among which may be mentioned the fact of their ideas of rhyme being so different from ours, the difficulty of putting into good Chinese the poetic and devotional ideas which are so familiar to us, and the difficulty of our entering into the spirit of Chinese poetry. What is rhyme to the Chinese is not such to the foreigner and vice versa. And how to express our highest and best religious thought in verse which shall be both intelligible and singable, is something exceedingly difficult of attainment, and perhaps will only be satisfactorily accomplished by some Chinese Wesley or Watts yet to be born. The mysteries of Chinese poetry—as such—are profound indeed, and it is as well perhaps not to try to fathom or master them in our present attempts at hymn-making (Fitch, 1895:467).

As well as facing problems in text translation and setting translated hymn texts to music, the missionaries also had to overcome difficulties of a musical nature. Western hymn music, when first introduced by predominantly British and American missionaries in the early days of Protestant evangelisation of China, was characterised by its homogeneity. "Nearly all the hymns were translations and the tunes those in use in the Occident" (Latourette, 1929: 419). From the very beginning, Chinese Christians had difficulty with European music owing to their being unaccustomed to Western diatonic scales and the novelty of congregational singing. This forced missionaries to experiment with different musical practices in different locales.

Early missionaries noted significant difficulties in teaching their converts to sing Western tunes. One contributor to the Chinese Recorder complained in 1887 that "it is only with the greatest difficulty that the average Chinaman can learn even one of our tunes" (Anon, 1887: 402). Similar complaints were voiced again and again by missionaries all over China. Some missionaries, in extreme exasperation, even went so far as to describe "congregational singing" as "congregational torture" (John, 1891: 311, see also Gamewell, 1924: 111-112).

This situation was not unique to China. Maori, the indigenous population of New Zealand, had difficulty with European music when first introduced, as evidenced by the following passage by the missionary Richard Taylor in 1839:

> …the lads are very fond of singing but certainly they have no notion of music. Their native airs embrace no more than three or four notes and they carry no more into the hymns they sing, indeed it is the most discordant singing I have ever heard, no country choir in England being worse (Cited in McLean, 1969: 156).

Similar experiences can be cited in Hawaii where "not a native that can rise or fall the eight notes without assistance" (Kanahele, 1979:130). Just like missionaries in New Zealand who had to compromise by allowing hymn-singing to traditional waiata tunes (McLean, 1969:156-162), Protestant missionaries in China were forced to work out strategies to combat problems with hymn-singing.

Writing of Protestant hymnody in Polynesia but in a statement just as true of China, Amy Stillman observes:

> Musical strategies varies among missionaries and even mission stations. To some extent, islanders' exposure to introduced hymnody depended on the musical interests and talents of individual missionaries. More generally, British missionaries used different musical strategies from their American counterparts, which resulted in variety in the repertory and competence in hymn-sing (Stillman, 1993: 91).

To the British missionary William Soothill 蘇慧廉 and a considerable number of China missionaries the biggest problem accounting for the Chinese inability to sing Christian hymns effectively stemmed from their difficulty with Western diatonic scale:

> The Chinese in every-day life …make use solely of the pentatonic or pentatonic scale….if you do not want good tunes spoiling never choose one that cannot be played entirely on the black keys of the piano, or one that at least has no sustained notes on any of the white keys. The Chinese cannot, except after long and careful training (as in the case of children in our schools), sing a tune in which the major fourth or seventh appears, especially if it be a sustained note (Soothill, 1890: 224).

His solution to this problem was to choose "tunes that are suited to the native voice" and evade the use of "the fourth and seventh notes" (Soothill 1890: 226).

Soothill's idea of avoiding the use of the major fourth and seventh was fairly representative of the missionary opinions at the time. Charles S. Champness of the American Methodist Episcopal Mission at Yiyang 益陽 in Hunan 湖南 Province wrote in 1905: "In choosing tunes which are not pentatonic it is a good rule to avoid such as abound in accidentals and semitones and particularly such as have *fah* or *te* on an accented syllable, or upon the last syllable in the line." For the sake of easy attainment, he recommended American melodies such as "Iowa," or "Kentucky," "Forest," and "Harmony Grove," as "excellent tunes for Chinese use." He also mentioned Scottish airs like "Auld Lang Syne" and "Ye Banks and Braes" as suitable pentatonic tunes for Chinese congregation singing (Champness, 1905: 560-61).

The Rev. Arthur Bonsey 潘雅德 of Central China Religious Tract Society was of the opinion that "in the church services the bulk of the tunes sung shall be easy, while occasionally allowing a more difficult measure in order to gratify and encourage the younger part of the congregation." By "easy" he meant "any tune which contains no half-notes, or only one or two unaccented half-notes." He further asserted:

> The more a tune conforms to the diatonic scale the more disastrous will be the failure of the congregation to render it correctly. The true method is at first, and for a considerable time, to stick faithfully to pentatonic, or nearly pentatonic tunes. Such tunes as "Kentucky," "Balerma," "Evan," "Ortonville," "Soldau," "Amesbury," and others can all be easily learned and intelligently and correctly sung by Chinese congregation (Bonsey, 1909: 285).

The Rev. William Munn of Church Missionary Society also complained about the difficulties of teaching Chinese boys to sing the semitones. In an exasperated tone, he declared: "It is to a large extent wasted energy to endeavour to teach the more ornate of our hymn tunes to the average Chinese congregation. The only reward one gets is excruciating agony resultant on hearing a loved melody in ruins" (Munn, 1912: 535). Like his colleagues, he too

attributed the failure to the pentatonic scale, which, according to him, "seems to foster quite a different method of musical thinking" (Munn, 1912: 534). One of his ways of overcoming the difficulty was to produce tune-books "to meet Chinese capabilities by a provision of pentatonic tunes" (Munn, 1912: 535).

Of the earliest missionaries who experimented with the use of Chinese musical elements in hymn composition were the Welsh Baptist missionary Timothy Richard 李提摩太 (1845-1919) and his wife Mary. Together they were responsible not only for the selection of pentatonic tunes in church services but also for the production of the earliest music teaching manual in Chinese *gongche* 工尺 notation.

The importance of music in Timothy Richard's evangelistic work was evident even before he met his musically gifted wife in 1878. Like most missionaries at the time, Richard began his career in the early 1870s by open-air preaching and passing out religious tracts in Chefoo 芝罘 and other places in Shandong 山東 (Bohr, 1972: 5). But he was frustrated that his efforts were not resulting in anything "worth mentioning" (Richard, 1916: 48). After much soul searching he concluded that this failure was caused by as much methodological flaws as by the irrelevance of his message to the Chinese situation. One of the adjustments he made was to adapt the Christian messages to the Chinese environment through hymn singing. The hymnal he compiled comprised "about thirty hymns." These hymns were "chosen because they appealed to the conscience of the non-Christian as soon as he heard them" (Bohr, 1972: 8). The Richards' missionary pragmatism also saw them appropriating Chinese religious and ritual tunes in their church services:

> We have adapted some airs of Chinese songs, Buddhists' chants and Confucian chants, to be used in Christian worship, vocal and instrumental. In Tai-yen-fu [Taiyuan 太原], two Sundays in the month, when our evangelists came in for their weeks' study, we had to help in the praise, besides the Mason and Hamlin organ used every Sunday, two flutes and a flat drum, which last kept us most mercilessly up to time (Richard, 1890: 346).

According to Mrs. Richard's own account, the following airs "have been effectively used in Christian work in Shantung [Shandong] and Shansi [Shanxi], the Chinese of course being fond of them, and as they are mostly free of semitones, they sing them well" (Richard, 1889: 580).
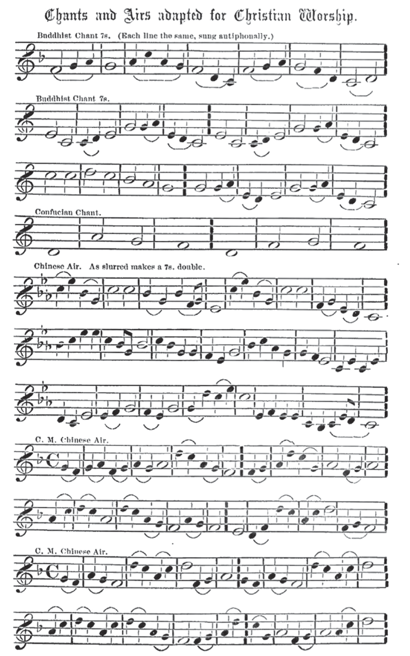


Fig. 1: Source: Chinese Recorder 20 (December 1889), p. 581

The Richards were not alone in his effort to musically indigenise hymns. Nor was the interest in the pentatonic scale confined to China only. According to a letter published in the 1888 October issue of the Chinese Recorder, the Rev. W. E. Griffis of Boston, formerly of Japan, made "certain inquiries about hymns and music in China". To quote Griffis' own words:

> I am especially interested to know whether any converted Chinese have written Christian poetry, stanzas, lyrics or hymns, which the missionaries have

translated into poetry or hymns of our metres; and especially should I be glad to know whether, out of the Chinese music, any melodies have been extracted or tunes made and set to our musical score (Baldwin, 1888: 489).

The Rev. J. E. Walker 和約瑟 of the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Fuzhou 福州 had been an active participant of Christian music in China. In 1889 he and Miss Ella J. Newton published the New Hymn Book in the Fuzhou dialect. The following year, they in collaboration with the Methodist Episcopal Mission published the Sacred Songs (Sheng, 1964: 91). According to Walker's own account provided in 1906, his "first attempt at a pentatonic tune for the Chinese was made over thirty years ago". Although he did not "think much of it as a tune" "it is much sung by our Christians" (Walker, 1906-498).

Mrs. Couling (?- 1922), wife of the more famous English Baptist minister Samuel Couling 庫壽齡, was also a veteran in church music. In addition to her musical work at the Tsingchow (Qingzhou 青州) High School, she published, in Shandong in 1895, Pentatonic Tune Book, in which she included pentatonic tunes "contributed by English church musicians of standing, such as Mr. C. E. Smith, organist of Regents Park Baptist Chapel, London; Mr. Josiah Booth, Rev. Carey Bonner, and others" (Champness, 1909: 190). One special feature of the book "is the adaptation of a number of familiar Western tunes to the Chinese scale, by taking out the semi-tones" (Sheng, 1964: 396).

Using the pentatonic scale certainly helped the English Baptist Mission in its congregational singing in Qingzhou, Shandong province. Soliciting opinions on the "advisability of keeping for ordinary congregational purposes, to the pentatonic scale," in 1901, the Rev. Frederick J. Shipway wrote:

So far as I have been able to test the singing, either here, or in a few other places, the pentatonic tunes are sung with much greater correctness and heartiness and are more conducive to the spirit of true praise and worship than tunes in the full scale (Shipway, 1901: 626).

He further expressed his wish to "compile a new tune book" but was hoping to get more pentatonic tunes. However, unlike Mrs. Couling, Shipway did not "feel right to alter existing full-scale tunes, as used in the home lands, to make them pentatonic." So he was hoping to "receive any pentatonic tunes which may be kindly sent to us, or to be afforded information as to where or in what books they may be procured." He made it clear that:

Tunes to all metres will be welcome, but specially to hymns like "At the Name of Jesus," "I love to tell the Story," "When Morning gilds the Skies," "How Firm a Foundation," "Art Thou Weary," "I gave My Life for Thee," "Christian Seek not yet Repose," "Forward be our Watchword," "By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored," "When Mothers of Salem," and others of more or less uncommon metre. In some of these it almost seems sacrilege to wrest the words from their familiar tunes, but if the position of adopting pentatonic tunes be the right one, the wresting has to be done, or the singing of beautiful hymns will inspire feelings very remote from that of worship (Shipway, 1901: 626).

The Rev. C. S. Champness' interest in, and experience of, the use and need of pentatonic music in the Chinese church was inspired from reading Soothill's 1890 article "Chinese Music and Its Relation to Our Native Services" (Champness, 1905: 559). Like that of the Rev. Walker, Champness" approach was to create tunes based on the pentatonic scale. In his own

experiment, he found "it best to write a new tune to a well-known hymn wherever possible in a new rhythm and key." Contrary to the opinion "the old is better" held by some hymn and tune lovers, he believed that "a new tune should be as much unlike the old one as possible" (Champness, 1905: 560).

Soothill went a step further in his appropriation of indigenous musical materials by suggesting that "tunes that do not accord with it [pentatonic scale] easily ought, for the sake of the tunes themselves, for our sakes, whose ears are tortured by hearing the native way of singing them, and for the sake of the Chinese, that they may not be called upon to sing what their voices and ears are unsuited to, to be discarded, or used only when absolutely necessary" (Soothill, 1890: 226). Reasoning that "in Western countries we should never dream of introducing tunes into our services, which involved frequent and difficult changes of key in the melody," he maintained that the "principle" in "our choice of tunes for Chinese public worship" ought to be simplicity and suitability. He even went as far as suggesting the wholesale adoption of Chinese melodies in church service:

> Many of the native melodies are really pretty, but unfortunately, like some of our own good music, the words associated with the music are not always of the best. Why not unwed some of these tunes from their garbage and appropriate them in our services? Our style of singing them would be so different from the native screech that there would be no danger of recalling the original words. These tunes would, to the majority, be unknown in their new dress, and yet they are so peculiarly suited to the native ear and voice that the musically inclined in our congregations would catch up the air almost instinctively (Soothill, 1890: 226-227).

As someone who, in the summer of 1889, "spent an hour every day with a couple of Chinese musicians and attained some proficiency on the native fiddle, besides adding to my stock of music a score or more of pleasing native melodies translated into our notation" (Soothill, 1890: 222), Soothill was in a better position to judge the suitability of Chinese tunes in church service. He suggested the following four ways of adopting "native airs": "the adoption of the whole air and the composition of hymns of the same metre as the original song;" "the adoption of the whole air and the composition of hymns to fit smoothly to it;" "the adaptation of the air itself to hymns already composed;" and "the adaptation or altering of a portion of the tune to suit hymns already composed" (Soothill, 1890: 227). Soothill's advocacy of making use of indigenous musical traditions did not stop at mere recommending the adoption of native airs.

> If trumpets, harps and cymbals were used with such effect in the Jewish temple service; if in our churches in England and America fifty years ago violins, flutes, clarinets and basses lent such an effect to the singing that many people now-a-days think the old style better than the new; and if in our own day we think so much of our choirs and spend so much on our organs then why should we not in our Chinese services use the instruments THEY TAKE DELIGHT IN to make our unattractive services more enjoyable? (Soothill, 1890: 227).

Although we are yet to find evidence as to whether Soothill actually put his ideas into practice, documented cases of hymn-singing to native airs show the practice was neither of a limited scope nor of a short duration (Tao, 1994: 186-187). Writing in 1920, Louise S. Hammond 郝路義, the American missionary who taught Yang Yinliu 杨荫浏 the fundamentals of Western music theory, had this to say:

> Experiments have been made in different parts of China…with varying degrees of success, in building up a native hymnology by adding Christian words to ancient Chinese melodies or by making or finding out other simple tunes which could be readily assimilated by a Chinese congregation (Hammond, 1920: 180).

Differences in musical scales were not the only problem that prevented the Chinese from singing Western tunes. Western melodies also posed difficulties with their varieties of time, movement, metre, and compass. The Rev. J. E. Walker, for example, believed that "a tune which exceeds one octave in range of pitch will go either too high or too low for the natural range of the average Chinese voice." So in order to make their congregation sing imported tunes well, "missionaries ought to make some concession." He provided the following account to illustrate his point:

> I once had a Chinese cook who, I thought, had no ear for music, till I overheard him singing a tune correctly but on a very low pitch. The next morning at prayers I pitched the tune about two tones low; and he started in two or three notes lower still, but soon came up to my pitch; and after a few days I had to lower the tune only about one tone below concert pitch to get his voice up to mine.

Based on the success of this experiment, Walker concluded:

> There is now and then a Chinese voice that must be met by raising the pitch; but it is easier to get them down than it is to get heavy voices up; and many of our tunes are pitched about one tone too high for the best results with the average Chinese congregation (Walker, 1902: 439).

3. Protestant Hymnody – Chinese vs. Western

Not all missionaries were satisfied with the adoption of Chinese melodic patterns or of Western airs founded on the pentatonic scale at the expense of authentic Western tunes. For some, the use of pentatonic melodies "is purely a matter of expediency" (Sheng, 1964: 395), and "the long-range goal remained the transmission of "good sacred music"" (Charter & DeBernardi, 1998: 96). One missionary made it clear that "Western tunes in all their variety and beauty are what we should aim at" (Bitton, 1909: 198). This train of thought was expressed nowhere clearer than in an article written by the Rev. J. E. Walker. After sending to the editor of the Chinese Recorder an original pentatonic tune, Walker hastened to add:

> If I thought there was any necessary rivalry between pentatonic tunes and heptatonic ones, I would hardly wish to encourage the use of the former; but it seems to me that the difference between Chinese music and Western music is not limited to this difference in scales; and I look upon pentatonic tunes, constructed on Western models, as helpful in the introduction of Western music (Walker, 1906: 497).

He also took pains to suggest that missionaries "ought to … persistently drill the pupil in our boarding-schools in the Western scale and the Western tunes". As far as he was concerned: The pentatonic scale can afford only imperfect harmony; and if we are going to give our pupils and students thorough instruction in music, of course we must have the full scale. Playing the air, only, with both hands in unison, is good for tackling a raw audience; but playing the full harmony certainly helps to educate the ear of pupils to appreciate the half tones" (Walker, 1906: 497).

Earlier in a letter to the editor of the Chinese Recorder, Mary J. Farnham, a missionary of the American Presbyterian Mission who introduced music teaching in her school in Shanghai in the 1860s, wrote:

> I would like to ask if it would not be better to broaden the standard of music in China rather than compose tunes which would keep them down to their pentatonic style? The popular idea of Westerners is to elevate the Chinese in religion and civilization, which would certainly include music. It will take time, the same as anything else, but it can be done as I can testify (Farnham, 1906: 216).

While some missionaries found fault with China's pentatonic scale in terms of musical sophistication, others rejected the use of indigenous melodies on moral and ethical grounds. Indeed, few missionaries believed that "Chinese music can be sung by the Chinese –even Christians – to the glory of God" (Bitton, 1909: 196). In spite of his enthusiasm for the wholesale adoption of Chinese indigenous musical traditions in church services Soothill was not unaware of some of the pitfalls associated with this practice. He pointed out, for example, "the words associated with the music are not always of the best" (Soothill, 1890: 226). For the same reason, even the culturally more sensitive Julia B. Mateer 狄就烈 (1837-1898) took a dim view of "the great body both of *kü-tsï* [*quzi* 曲子] and *shiao kü-tsï* [*xiao quzi* 小曲子], dismissing them as something that "the world would have been better had they never been written" (Mateer, 1896: 107).

Expressing similar sentiments, even some Chinese Christians voiced their disapproval of using native tunes. "I do not like to see the adoption of other tunes in place of the Western tunes," one Chinese convert declared emphatically. The reason for his objection was that Chinese tunes "have been composed by low class people and are not suitable for singing in decent families." In a somewhat Confucian fashion he looked at China's high antiquity for inspiration but dismissed "Chinese music of the present day" as having "a great tendency to influence people to evil thoughts." In the same vein, one convert believed "that the use of Western tunes is necessary, as the Chinese airs are too light for church music." Another Chinese Christian singled out the "deteriorated" state of "vocal music in China" as the reason for sticking to "the Western tunes", if only for the time being. Frankly admitting Chinese music was not as agreeable as Western music due to his missionary education, a certain Yau Tsih-lam from Canton even asked indignantly: "How could the church abandon the existing foreign music and take up the cast-off Chinese music?" Yau pointed out what he considered to be an indisputable fact:

> Improvement of music can be found in churches where schools are attached to them, as in the case of missionary schools all students must take up music or singing, an opportunity is offered for training young men or girls to improve music and to show their musical talent (Yau, 1909: 343-44).

In the case of churches which had no connection with any schools, his suggestion was that "students from other schools should be asked to assist them as leaders in singing." In conclusion, he expressed his wish to "see more Christians take more pains in church music by studying hard to read music and to play either a harmonium, organ or piano" (Yau, 1909: 344).While most Chinese Christians either explicitly or implicitly stated the necessity and possibility of a future Chinese hymnody, one convert was openly sceptical about the point of differentiating between

China and the rest of the Christian world. "As the hymns used throughout Christendom are sung with practically the same music," as he put it, "it is not feasible to adopt any music that is peculiar to the Chinese" (Bitton, 1909: 200-201). Yet the harshest criticism came from a Chinese Christian convert named Wang Chung-yu. In a lengthy article he contributed to the Chinese Recorder in 1901, Wang roundly denounced "the music as used in Chinese churches now throughout this empire" as "not only dry and factitious, but it simply dwarfs the musical tastes of many and renders the worship unspiritual" (Wang, 1901: 336). He was particularly critical of the use of Chinese secular music in church worship:

> Some missionaries, thinking they have stricken a new path, have made use of Chinese native songs for religious service, disregarding its sensual character and nature; it is really demoralizing and is unfit for religious purposes when the song sung conjures up by association the many bad and sometimes immoral ideas with which such songs are associated. We must know that the art of Chinese music has been practically lost and the existing songs are never sung by gentlemen, and are, as a rule, used in theatres and sung by the lower classes of people. Even if the songs are not connected with immoral ideas, yet its music drags us down to the sensual and material phase of life. I hope that missionaries will take special note of this (Wang, 1901: 339).

4. Protestant Hymnody – Sensual [Material] vs. Spiritual

There should be little doubt that ultimately, the missionaries were aiming at using music as a tool to propagate the Christian faith. The teaching of music was aimed at "building up a church of those who can sing Western tunes as truly and as sweetly as Christians do in the West" (Bitton, 1909: 207). Yet missionaries were by no means undivided in their opinions on the type of church musical repertoire and musical pedagogy that should be propagated. This is clearly reflected in the following response to a survey of opinions upon Church music conducted in 1909:

> Too little attention has been paid to the quality of the music. Too much to the popularity of the tune in a country and among people who knew little and cared less what the quality of their music was. The result has been the introduction to China of a number of bad tunes, with some sort of catchy air, which has already done much to debase the standard expected by our Chinese Christians. But it is not too late to remedy this if we would only realize that we want tunes which God will care to hear instead of simply those which we care to sing (Bitton, 1909: 198).

When Protestant missionaries first arrived on the China scene in the mid nineteenth century, the hymns they taught were typical late eighteenth-century strophic hymn and psalm tunes of either British or American origins, which were, on the whole, fairly uniform in style. American evangelical and gospel hymn tunes in verse-chorus alternation were not introduced until the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is true that by the latter part of the nineteenth century some missionaries were indeed "committed to instilling in the Chinese an appreciation for full Western tonality and harmony, and ultimately for the music of the Western musical canon" (Charter and Debernardi, 1998: 96). One missionary, for example, called for the "use in schools of the higher grades our Western music and Western hymns". And another "heartily endorse[d] the translation of foreign hymns and the use of Western tunes," (Bitton, 1909: 199-200).

The fact that this call to introduce Western music to the Chinese is primarily driven by their Christian conviction, as opposed to a love of music for its own sake, not only determined

the kind of music to be introduced but also heightened the need for training in music:

> Much teaching is needed in order to get our Christians to realise just what the singing is for, and time should be taken outside the regular church services both to train the voices and teach them the meaning of the hymns as well as to follow the tunes. They need to be taught that it is part of a spiritual service (Bitton, 1909: 208).

That some of the missionaries were fairly discriminating as regards the type of Western church music they were to introduce to their Chinese converts is manifested in the following passage the Rev. F. L. Norris of the Church of England Mission, Beijing, wrote in 1909:

> I am not a learned musician and I am fond of melody, but I have no hesitation in saying that the music which we often venture to offer to Almighty God has no excellence at all unless it is considered that mere popularity is excellence. It may be so in a sense where the main object is edification, but it can never be so where the main object is devotion. The type of music which we find in Moody and Sankey's Hymnbook was never intended primarily for devotion, but for edification; but its lamentable popularity (if I may be forgiven the epithet) has caused it to be constantly intruded into devotional worship in utter forgetfulness of the need to intrinsically good music (Norris, 1909: 181).

The ideal music for congregational use, in his opinion, should possess "the two essential qualities": "intrinsic goodness in itself and self-control in its performance" (Norris, 1909: 180). For this sake, he encouraged singing of solemn nature such as unison singing with octave accompaniment and the use of Gregorian music instead of Chinese tunes (Norris, 1909: 183). Laura M. White, the American missionary educator who introduced college level education at her institution in Nanjing in 1907, also wrote:

> Is our only reason for withholding our best, the sorrowful truth that we missionaries are only familiar with Moody and Sankey music, not knowing the older and better hymns? Then let us send to the homeland for our dust-covered hymnals and learn the many hymns that for centuries have been the solace of God's singing saints. These are translated into Chinese with better results than the Moody and Sandey collection and the lesser lights – Stainer, Smart, Dykes, Monk, etc. Practically I selected only good composers (White, 1901: 592).

By "good composers" she meant composers of Western Classical tradition, as she explained: "I selected the tunes from the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Church of England hymn books. Many were written by Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn". Apart from the fact that "Chinese voices seem better adapted to the older, slower standard tunes of our hymnals, especially the stately, measured, rich, warm German chorales", she argued, "the Chinese show a national characteristic in really preferring the better and more dignified kind of music" (White, 1901: 591-592).

Among those who shared Norris' and White's dim view of the Moody and Sankey types of American popular tunes were indeed some Chinese Christians. In fact, the afore-mentioned Wang Chung-yu was one of the earliest to voice in print his strong disapproval of the type of music introduced to the Chinese Church by the missionaries. As early as 1901, he wrote:

> Alas! How sad is it to think that this [music], the most precious part of our nature, has oftentimes been blunted by what is called by Marx the Aubergistic music, i.e., music of a sensational character without having a tint of spirituality in it. But still sadder is it to see that the majority of missionaries

> have introduced this kind of sensational music into the Chinese church, whether from ignorance or indifferentism or some philosophies of their own (Wang, 1901: 335).

Wang particularly abhorred the fact that "the Chinese church, taken as a whole, is now flooded with a kind of sensational music I denounced … [as] the Sankeyism" (Wang, 1901: 338):

> What is the difference between a Bach and a Sankey? It is at bottom a difference of materialism and spiritualism in their wide unrestricted sense. The music of Sankey is sensational, the music of Bach is spiritual, and calls forth the innermost feeling of our being. American music (I mean sacred music, i.e., church music) as represented by such popular composers as Sankey, Bliss, Booth, McGranahan, etc., of whom Sankey is the typical one, is simply deteriorating in its effects, and by them it is "dragged down to the trivialities and nothingness of common life." …Go with me now to what is commonly called a revival meeting in America. Certainly they use Sankey and such American writers who are, of course, their favourites. We notice that they bawl out over some choruses and refrains, and we may be led to cry out with them. What do we find in use after the meeting? Nothing! But only a faint idea that we have sung something. Our spiritual nature is still, alas, as dormant as ever. Again go with me to a Church in England cathedral. There upon the very chanting of hymn, canticle, anthems, and psalms, our whole spiritual nature is awakened and is lifted up, and we feel that we are standing before the presence of God. Our every fibre is thrilled and touched from the solemn and impressive music; we are, as it were, transported into a spiritual and aerial realm (Wang, 1901: 337).

After likening "this Sankeyism" to "those trashy novels [which] can only be ousted by introducing such masterpieces as Haydn's Creation, etc", Wang suggested that "children as well as men must be taught to sing good music," by which he meant "the music composed by such composers as Sullivan, Dyke, Monk, Bach, Mason, etc., etc.." (Wang, 1901: 338).

In sharp contrast to his harsh condemnation of musical practice in American churches, which, in his view, "were affected with sensational music," Wang gave his full endorsement to churches belonging to the Basel, Rhenish, Berlin and Church Missions because they used music of "a higher type" (Wang, 1901: 338). Being a Chinese with some faculty for music, Wang was also incensed by the condescending assertion prevalent among missionaries that "the Chinese have no musical ear and musical harmony is beyond their comprehension." He argued that:

> To say that we Chinese cannot comprehend music of a higher type is equivalent to saying that the Chinese cannot comprehend the high moral and spiritual teaching of Jesus Christ, which is contrary to theory and fact. Musical nature is not a quantity, it is a quality; and this nature only requires proper stimulation to be awakened. It is quite true that the Chinese taste of music is dormant, but this gives us stronger reason to cultivate it by the use of good music. The fact that you are weak, shows that you ought to take good and nutritive food; the fact that you are sinful, impels you to take moral and spiritual lessons; similarly, the fact that your musical taste is moribund, requires proper training in good and spiritual music (Wang, 1901: 339).

Wang also cast doubt on the missionary rationale that the Chinese simply could not hear or reproduce some of the semitones and phrases that come easily enough to an Englishman and refuted the belief that music of the Sankey type should be the only music into which the Chinese congregation ought to be initiated:

> Spiritual music is not harder to learn than sensational music. Take again Monk's "Abide with me" and Sankey's "Only waiting." According to my opinion it is easier to learn the music of the

former than that of the latter (Wang, 1901: 339).

Citing a Chinese example where the students of Dengzhou College 登州文會館 successfully performed difficult music such as Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" to support his argument, he concluded by asserting that "What the Chinese lack is not musical taste but proper instruction [and] it is better to learn one piece of good music than to learn ten pieces of bad music" (Wang, 1901: 339).

Wang's article is significant in that it marked the coming of age of native Christians in the reception of Western music. Up to this point, as David Sheng has pointed out, "native Christians were only silent recipients of whatever hymns the foreign missionaries gave them" (Sheng, 1964: 173). Now they were no longer content to be the silent recipients and demanded their voices heard.

Wang Chung-yu might be among the first Chinese Christians to voice his aversion to American musical sensationalism but he was certainly not alone. His voice was well heeded within the Church. Interested readers asked the Chinese Recorder to create in its pages a department "in which questions relating to the praise of the churches could be dealt with" (Anon., 1905: 528). As a result a "Hymnology Department" was created in October 1905.

The fact that Chinese Christians were concerned with the low state of church music is also illustrated in the above-mentioned survey of opinions on Church music conducted in 1909. One Chinese respondent, for example, suggested that the music or melodies for use at the Christian church "should be classical" while another declared emphatically that he did not "believe in sensationalism in the Church of God here in China or elsewhere, that is, anything that carries with it any theatrical association should be deprecated in all church services." Like Wang, the latter specifically denounced the use of foreign tunes "of the Sankey [original italic] type," arguing that "church music should be solemn and impressive" (Bitton, 1909: 208, 209).

5. Teaching the Chinese to Sing the Praise of the Lord

China missionaries not only concerned themselves with kinds of church music to introduce to their Chinese congregations, they also discussed ways of teaching church music. Based on her own experience in teaching music at the Dengzhou College and Dengzhou Girls' High School, Julia Mateer acknowledged that it was indeed "a great task" to teach the Chinese to sing. But she had found "labour-saving ways" of doing it (Mateer, 1896: 108), believing that "the ability to sing well is acquired only by much practice" (Mateer, 1896: 105). More specifically, she believed that:

> It is a principle with the best teachers not to do for the pupil that which he can do for himself, but to encourage and direct his efforts. This holds good in singing as truly as in other things. If the teacher gives attention to the private practice of his pupils making criticisms and suggestions as needed he may save himself much of the wearing drudgery of teaching (Mateer, 1896: 108).

Laura White, writing of her experience in teaching Chinese girls to sing, detailed the teaching hours, methods and musical materials she used at a Methodist girls' school in Nanjing:

> In our schools we devote a half hour daily to vocal music. The girls sing in four parts -- first and second soprano, first and second contralto--and use anthems, choruses from Smart, Brahms, Gounod, Mendelssohn, Mozart, selections from oratorios, etc... I endeavour to commence every

music lesson by a short exercise in respiration. Standing erect, with shoulders down, the pupils slowly, evenly, gradually, inhale the air through the mouth, which is to be kept slightly open. When the lungs are filled to the full, the air is to be retained a few seconds, then just as quietly and gradually expelled. The body must be so relaxed and buoyant that a slight touch is sufficient to "topple over" a pupil. Insist that the children breathe in this manner, and while keeping the lungs very full of air, use economy in its expenditure. The Chinese waste breath, and the impulse to let the air escape must be resisted (White, 1901: 589-590).

Noticing that "Chinese voices are lower than ours," White suggested, "a good plan is to take out from the organ (harmonium) the highest or even the two highest reeds. Then regularly move all the others up." Since "a student of the English language can learn to read some of our classics just as easily as light sensational literature," she reasoned, "it is a mistake to consider that good music must of necessity be difficult." "Our girls learned the hymns with absolutely no difficulty" (White, 1901: 591-592).

The Rev. C. S. Champness, a man who, in his own words, "possessed of the gift of melody and had composed hymn tunes which were found acceptable by certain friends in England who had made use of them" (Champness, 1905: 559), also focused on proper training. He explained the ways he approached the problem of Chinese inability to sing the semitones:

In the earlier lessons it is better to keep the voluntaries sung in the pentatonic scale, as there is less liability to error in doing this, but after the children begin to get some confidence the two difficult sounds, Fah and Te, should be taught. This is not an easy task, but it can be accomplished with patience and perseverance. Here is where the value of good methods comes in. The children must be taught something about intervals and the difference between major and minor intervals, especially in the case of thirds. It must be pointed out that while the intervals Doh Me and Ray Fah are both thirds, there is a great difference between them; one being a major interval and the other a minor. Show that Me Soh is a minor interval, and that to get the seemingly difficult interval Ray Fah, one must think of the similar interval Me Soh …In teaching the singing of the notes Te and Fah, it is necessary to give plenty of patterns of singing the semitones Me Fah and Te Doh, also the difference between the major intervals Do Me and the minor interval Ray Fah. The children should be trained to listen for these intervals (Champness, 1909: 193).

Champness was well aware of the range of problems involved in delivering such musical lessons. He pointed out specifically "that the work of teaching singing is best undertaken by those who have a fairly good acquaintance with Chinese, [as] a beginner in the language is hampered by not being able to point out mistakes made." He indicated that he was hoping to "write out a model lesson with the Chinese phrases employed in teaching a single tune" (Champness, 1909: 193-194).

Champness' emphasis on proper training can also be seen in his promotion of musical literacy, as the following passage can testify:

I do not, however, agree with Mr. Ohlinger's method of imitation. It is better to adopt a plan which is far more educational, namely, to use the tonic sol-fa method, teaching the children to find how to produce these difficult sounds by remembering their place in the scale and their relationship to the other notes of the scale (Champness, 1905: 560).

Later, in the 1910s, Champness did experiment with the Tonic Sol-fa method and reported on the success he had achieved in teaching local Chinese children to sing (Stevens 2007: 58).

6. Chinese Involvement in Hymn-Making

On the early hymnody in China, Bliss M. Wiant 范天祥 (1895-1975), the missionary-turned-scholar who played an important role in the indigenisation of Christian hymns in China, wrote in 1946:

> The first non-Roman Catholic missionaries to China took with them their own culture and shared it with their converts. Due to the paternalistic spirit which characterized most missionaries of the nineteenth century there was little stimulation on their part to inspire a creative response in terms of hymns and indigenous materials from these converts (Wiant, 1946: 428).

An examination of the early hymnbooks published in China confirms this characterisation. Of the thirty hymns contained in the earliest Protestant hymnal the *Yang Sin Shen she* [*yangxin shenshi* 養心神詩] published by Robert Morrison in 1818, for example, most were translations of hymns from Scottish Psalter, Watts' hymns and the Olney hymns by Cowper and Newton. W. H. Medhurst's hymnal of the same title contained seventy-one hymns chiefly from Rippon and Watt (Sheng, 1964: 72-75). In the case of the *Kung Tsan She* [*gongzan shi* 公贊詩] (Memorial Hymn Book), printed by the Presbyterian Mission Press in Shanghai in 1888, the selection of 275 hymns with tunes was actually done by people in the United States and then sent to China to be translated and edited (Sheng 1964: 99). Even as late as 1891 when Jonathan Lees 理一視 published his *Shengjiao shige* (聖教詩歌 Hymn Book) of 429 hymns in Tianjin, the bulk of the book remained composed of translations of all the important hymns in use in the West (Candlin, 1893: 169-70).

Yet, not all missionaries were content with a situation where "Chinese worship is with borrowed song, song that gives expression to the spiritual life of other races, and was wrought out under other conditions." Devello Z. Sheffield 謝衛樓 (1841-1913) of the American Board of Foreign Mission and the president of the North China College, for one, eagerly awaited "the creation of native sacred hymns and music which are born out of the life of the people, out of the experiences of the church in its victories and defeats, out of the sense of the presence and help of the Spirit of God in all the experiences and disciplines of life" (Sheffield, 1909: 189). Believing "a nation's hymnology must have its own style, its own thought and aspirations, its own devotion and religious fervour expressed in its own manners", William Munn drew attention to "the fact that only the Chinese themselves, whether by translation or original work, can really produce the hymnology that will touch them" (Munn, 1911: 701). Other missionaries also stressed the importance of encouraging "such Chinese as have musical ability to assist in solving the problem of hymnology for the Christian church" (Bitton, 1909: 199).

With the gradual heightening of nationalistic sentiment starting at the turn of the twentieth century, several Chinese Christians also joined the chorus in advocating a true Chinese hymnody. One Chinese Christian, for example, thought "it would be a splendid thing if some Chinese scholars, having good knowledge of church music, could be entrusted to undertake to compose Chinese sacred hymns" and believed that "the day will come when we shall be favoured with Chinese Christians of musical ability and good Chinese poetic bent, who will do much for the music of this country" (Bitton, 1909: 203). Another Chinese Christian confirmed this belief by stating confidently that "eventually there will be Chinese who will write hymns and compose melodies to suite them" (Bitton, 1909: 201).

Yet, in spite of the missionary agitation and the profusion of hymnbooks, "the day seems

yet far distant when the sanctified genius of native Christians will create a repertory of spiritual song worthy to carry the glad message of the Kingdom of Jesus to the ears and hearts of a nation," complained the Rev. George T. Candlin in 1893 (Candlin, 1893: 167). Even as late as 1917, "few Christian hymns have been written by Chinese" (Couling, 1917: 246). Indeed, before the turn of the twentieth century, "writing about hymns was almost exclusively the domain of Western missionaries" (Latourette 1929: 434; Charter and DeBernardi, 1998: 84).

Despite a dearth of original hymns by Chinese authors, "what work they have done," to use the Rev. C. S. Champness' words, "is of the best" (Champness, 1912: 251). The Rev. William Munn also remarked on the quality of Christian musical work by Chinese, saying "those few hymns which are the product of Native Christians … are, not unnaturally, the most popular amongst the Chinese Christians" (Munn, 1911: 709). One of the earliest Chinese hymn writers was Xi Shengmo 席勝魔 (1835? –1896, lit., "Xi the devil conqueror"), a pastor from Huozhou 霍州 in Shanxi Province, better known in English as Pastor Hsi of Shanxi.

To be sure, Xi was not the first Chinese convert to experiment with hymn writing and the honour of being the first recorded Chinese hymn writer is commonly attributed to a Chinese Jesuit Wu Li 吳曆 (courtesy name Yushan 漁山, style, Mojing daoren 墨井道人, 1632-1718) (Fang, 1988: 203-220). Pairing traditional "labelled tunes" (*qupai* 曲牌) with composed masses and hymns Wu compiled an anthology, entitled *Tianyue Zhengyin pu* 天樂正音譜 (Correct Tunes of Catholic Music), in the early years of the Qing. But almost all of Wu's hymns were published posthumously and it was unlikely that they were widely circulated. Therefore, insofar as popularity is concerned, Xi was definitely the most influential composer in early Chinese hymn writing.

Xi Shengmo, an opium addict-turned Christian, began composing hymns in the early 1880s. According to Champness, Xi's hymns "were set to Native Airs, and are 'Chinese of the Chinese' in their style" (Champness, 1912: 252). Because of this, and his gift as an excellent story teller, his hymns were extremely popular among Shanxi believers. "His famous revival hymn" in particular "has proved irresistible in its power to stir the people, and that in a way that no other hymn, whether translated or original, has been able to do" (Munn, 1911: 709). Champness even went as far as to declare: "no Englishman could write such hymns" (Champness, 1912: 252). One of Xi's first hymns, entitled "There is a Reason for This Gathering" (*Women zheci de juhui youge yuangu* 我們這次的聚會有一個緣故), "was widely used in North China at big Revival Meetings and Conventions" (Champness, 1912: 252). Xi's other hymns included "Gospel Preachers sent by Jesus" which appeared in the China Inland Mission Hymnal, "Bestowing Peace" (*Zhuci pingan* 主賜平安) and "Tell Abroad God's Truth" (*Xuanyang zhudao* 宣揚主道) (Taylor, 1900: 269-270). By using standard Western staff notation and chords as opposed to single melodic lines in the more commonly used Chinese gongche notation, Xi showed some basic grasp of such Western compositional techniques as four-part writing. Moreover, the technique of moving the top three voices in contrary motion to the bass and the avoidance of parallel octaves and perfect fifths indicates that his knowledge of Western music is more than rudimentary. Because of his innovative way of incorporating indigenous performance elements into the making of Christian hymns, such as the use of Shanxi folk melodies and local operatic arias, Western and Chinese scholars are of the opinion that Xi's hymns were, in many respects a watershed in the history of Chinese Christian hymnology (Tao, 1994: 175-76).

Besides Xi, other Chinese Christian converts also began to come to the fore in the preparation of Christian hymns. To be sure, native assistance had always been a feature in the literary work of China missionaries and hymnbook production was no exception. Robert Morrison certainly owed much to Lean Kung-fa [Liang Afa 梁阿發] for his able assistance in the compilation and printing of the *K'é taòu wĕn tsá shin she* [*qidao wen zanshen shi* 祈禱文贊神詩] (Prayers and Hymns) in 1833 (Sheng, 1964: 73). In the 1895 edition of the Blodget and Goodrich Hymnal, several original compositions were written by native Christians (Sheng 1964: 102). However, almost in all cases the role played by the humble Chinese assistant was little acknowledged. Only gradually did Chinese authors get a specific mention. Before the turn of the twentieth century, Chang Chiu-seng was perhaps one of only a handful of Chinese Christians noted for contributing an "original hymn" to an earlier hymnal edited by the English missionary Jonathan Lees 理一視 (1835-1904) (Sheng, 1964: 103). With the gradual coming of age of Chinese hymnody in the twentieth century this situation was to change. In the 1907 reprint of the hugely influential Blodget and Goodrich Hymnal a score or so of hymns began to be listed under Chinese authors (Chen, 2003: 40). Another sign of this increased recognition of native contribution is found in Albert Lutley's 陸義全 book published by the China Inland Mission in Shanxi around 1911. In this book over half (84 out of 168) of the hymns were written by native Christians. Referring to these hymns, the Rev. Munn commented in 1911:

> Their style is simple, and does not attempt to follow the elaborate laws observed by the Wenli poet; but many of them have an excellence highly valued by the Western critic. They are sincere, and express real and deep feeling; and are couched in language that, though ordinary Mandarin, is smooth and dignified, and is daily proving its ability to take hold of the hearts of the people (Munn, 1911: 709).

Although the way for joint efforts by foreign missionaries and native Christians to produce hymns of high quality, both textually and musically, had been established by the turn of twentieth century, hymnbooks issued solely by Chinese were to wait for a few more years. One of the first hymnbooks of this kind, the Association Hymnal (*Qingnian shige* 青年詩歌), was edited solely by the distinguished Chinese Christian scholar, textbook compiler and translator, Zia Hong-lai (Xie Honglai 謝洪賚, 1873-1916), and published by the General Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1908. This hymnal was later revised and enlarged by another eminent Chinese Christian leader, Dr. T. Z. Koo (Gu Ziren 顧子仁, 1887-1971), to include 192 hymns and nearly fifty patriotic songs (Chen, 2003: 40). Son of a Shanghai Anglican minister and a graduate of the Shanghai Christian St Johns' University, Koo had been an active member of the Y.M.C.A since 1918 and was well known for his love of music and his skills in playing the Chinese bamboo flute *dizi* 笛子 and *xiao* 簫. Koo's competence as a composer and song arranger was indicated by his setting of composed lyrics to traditional Chinese tunes and by the publication of a collection of 25 Chinese folk songs transcribed in Western staff notation in 1926 (Xie, 1972: 10).

Subsequent Chinese hymn writers and editors included Dora Yü (Yu Cidu 余慈度, 1873-1931), Leland Wang (Wang Zai 王載, 1898-1975), Mrs. Y. Y. Wan, T. C. Chao (Zhao Zicheng 趙紫宸, 1888-1979), Dr Timothy Ting-fang Lew (Liu Tingfang, 劉廷芳, 1891-1947), and Ernest Y. L. Yang (Yang Yinliu 楊蔭瀏, 1899-1984).

Conscious of "a need for a different collection of hymns in which to voice more perfectly the prayer and praises, the aspiration and worship of God's people," (Fitch, 1909: 292), Dora Yü prepared a hymnal of 100 gospel songs in Mandarin with music written in stave notation. This book, entitled Hymns of Revival (*Fuxing shige* 復興詩歌), was printed by the Presbyterian Mission Press in Shanghai in the first decade of the twentieth century (Sheng, 1964: 149). In Fuzhou 福州, Leland Wang, a Christian evangelist and sometimes referred to as the Moody of China, compiled *Fuxing budao shi* 復興佈道詩 (Evangelistic Hymns for Church Worship, Gospel Services and Revival Meetings) in 1923. The 120 hymns included in the initial edition published by the Alliance Press "were either collected, composed or translated by the compiler." The first music edition came out in 1926 and later a phonetic version was issued by the Phonetics Promotion Committee published (Sheng, 1964: 149-150). In Shanghai the National Committee of the Young Women Christian Association published *Zhonghua Jidujiao nü qingnianhui shige* 中華基督教女青年會詩歌 (Y. W. C. A. Hymn Leaflet) in 1924 and a year later the China Baptist Publication Society published Mrs. Y. Y. Wan's *Guoyu zanmeishi* 國語讚美詩 (Hymn Book New and Old). In Guangzhou the Guangdong Divisional Council of the Church of Christ in China issued *Songzhu shibian* 頌主詩編 jointly edited by Mrs. H. Davies and C. L. Cheung (Sheng, 1964: 150). In North China, the Rev. Y. M. Chia (Jia Yuming 賈玉銘, 1880-1964), known as the most prolific hymn writer of all Chinese Christians, published *Lingjiao shige* 靈交詩歌 (Fellowship Hymns), *Shengtu xinsheng* 聖徒心聲 (The Believers' Heart-felt Songs), *Desheng shige* 得勝詩歌 (Hymns of Triumph) and one other hymnal in the early 1930s in quick succession (Chen, 2003: 41).

The early decades of the twentieth century also saw an unprecedented level of collaboration between foreign missionaries and their Chinese colleagues. Unlike in the past, Chinese partners began to assume a leading role in hymn translation and writing, as well as hymnbook editing and production. Beginning in 1911, the Synod of the American Presbyterian Mission in north China decided to appoint an editorial board to oversee the reproduction of the Nevius and Mateer Hymn Book (*Zanshen shengshi* 贊神聖詩). Of the seven editors selected, only one, namely Watson M. Hayes 赫士 (1857-1944), was a foreign national. This Chinse dominated board was responsible for the successful publication in 1914 of a hymnbook of 390 carefully edited and rhymed hymns. The musical edition of the hymnal in stave notation was issued in 1917 (Wang, 1950: 49-54).

One good example of close Sino-Western collaboration in hymnbook production in the early decades of the twentieth century is the case of Chao Tzu-Chen (Zhao Zichen 趙紫宸, 1888-1979), a Christian theologian, educator, poet, and long-time dean of School of Religion at Yenching University, and his Yenching colleague Bliss Mitchell Wiant 范天祥 (1895-1975), an American Methodist minister who came to China in 1923 under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Together they published, in 1931, two widely-circulated hymnbooks, *Tuanqi shengge ji* 團契聖歌集 (Christian Fellowship Hymns) and *Minzhong shengge ji* 民眾聖歌集 (Hymns for the People). The former, consisting of 124 hymns all translated into the wenli style by Chao, was specifically designed "for the more advanced scholar class" at Yenching University (Fitch, 1935: 546). The latter, comprising 54 original compositions by Chao set to Chinese tunes by Wiant, was in the vernacular and designed for the less-educated rural Christians (Sheng, 1964: 151).

The most illuminating example of Sino-Western collaboration is found in the publication

in 1936 of a union hymnbook, *Putian songzan* 普天頌贊 (Hymns of Universal Praise). Initiated by the *Zhonghua Shenggong Hui* 中華聖公會 in 1928, the project took seven years to finish. A number of Chinese Christians were involved in the compilation from the very beginning. Robert F. Fitch 费佩德 (1873-1954), the American missionary who was responsible for bringing the "tentative edition" before the Zhonghua Shenggong Hui, the Church of Christ in China, the Methodist Episcopal Churches, North and South, the North China Kung Li Hui and the East China Baptist Convention in September 1931, wrote of the scope and, nature and importance of this Sino-Western cooperation:

> No such extensive cooperative effort has ever been attempted in China. Never have the Chinese aided in any such effort as they have done in this one. Two thousand original tunes and eight hundred hymns were submitted. From the large number only sixty were selected, because the Chinese on the Union Hymnal Committee in particular, wished to set high standards for the future so as to inspire further production. Many of these hymns are among the most beautiful in the entire collection (Fitch, 1935: 544).

He specifically singled out Ernest Y. L. Yang, Mrs. S. M. Woo (Zhou Shuan 周淑安, 1894-1974) and Timothy Lew for special praise.

Indeed, Ernest Yang had been the backbone of the project from its inception in 1928. Recommended by his mentor, the American missionary Louise S. Hammond (1887-1941), Yang worked, first, for the preparation of a new hymnbook for the Zhonghua Shenggong Hui and, then, as a member and executive secretary of the United Christian Hymnal Committee for the production of the union hymnbook. Robert F. Fitch, Yang's collaborator, had this to say about his contribution: "Mr. Yang, a man gifted in poetry and in music, who has written two Chinese works on music and musical instruments, has spent months of labour at this task alone" (Fitch, 1935: 767). Earlier, in reference to the music edition of the Hymns of Universal Praise, Fitch wrote:

> Mr. Yang is giving almost all his time to this work of supervision, including the artist work and tooling of the plate. He has developed unusual skill and has set new standards in the production of a page of Chinese staff notation (Fitch, 1935: 545).

Hammond, Yang's piano and music theory teacher, godmother and colleague at the United Christian Hymnal Committee, was so proud of her charge that she wrote in August 1939 the "discovery by me [of Yang] for work on the Chinese Hymnal has been probably my greatest contribution to the Church of China" (Cited in Micic 2009: 99).

As an editor Yang's work involved collecting, editing, translating and writing Christian hymns, but it was in setting Christian texts to Chinese melodies that he excelled himself. Moreover, as the executive secretary it was his job to work closely with other Committee representatives appointed by their respective churches. From 1932 to 1935, Yang, for example, worked closely with Timothy Lew translating a large corpus of hymnals into easily understandable but elegant Chinese (Fitch, 1935: 768). Together they also edited a quarterly journal on Chinese Christian Hymnology entitled *Shengge yu Shengyue* 聖歌與聖樂 (Hymns and Sacred Music). Besides Wiant, Yang's main foreign collaborators included Robert F. Fitch, with whom he wrote an article entitled "Divergent Opinions on Chinese Musicology" in early 1934 (Yang and Fitch, 1934: 293-300) and worked on hymn compiling projects such as

Anthems for a Chinese Church containing "forty-one anthems and antiphons for a choir of mixed voices" (Chinese Recorder, 1939: 333).

Conclusion

Christian hymn-singing played a major role in the introduction and gradual dissemination of Western music in China. Apart from exposing Chinese Christians to traditional Christian musical styles such strophic as hymn and psalm tunes of either British or American origins, hymn-singing also familiarised them with evangelical and gospel hymn tunes in verse-chorus alternation. More importantly, it ushered in a new style of singing, namely congregational singing, which was to be later used to great effect later by non-Christian Chinese reformers.

In his critique of Joseph Esherick and Paul Cohen's studies of the Boxer movement, James Hevia points out the shortcomings of "treat[ing] the Western presence in China as a known entity" (Hevia, 2003: 11). This criticism is also pertinent to our study of Christian hymns and hymnody in China. As has been shown above, missionaries of different nationalities and denominations did not share a uniform strategy in teaching the Chinese to sing the praise of the Lord.

The dissemination of Western music through the medium of Protestant hymns was not a one-way process with a linear trajectory. Musical exchange in this case was neither unilateral, nor systematic. It involved a complex process of mutual learning, adaptation and absorption. In their responses to native resistance, as the divergent forms of hymnals produced have shown, Protestant missionaries in their early efforts to Christianise China made much use of late eighteenth-century strophic hymn and psalm tunes. In the latter part of the nineteenth century some missionaries began to favour the use of Chinese musical and poetical traditions out of pragmatism while others preferred the adoption of American evangelical and gospel hymn tunes, and still others guarded jealously the so-called "gems" of the Western classical repertoire. Only with the rise of nationalism in the beginning of the twemtieth century did some missionaries begin to collaborate with their Chinese converts in the production of hymnbooks and to indigenise the Christian church music.

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